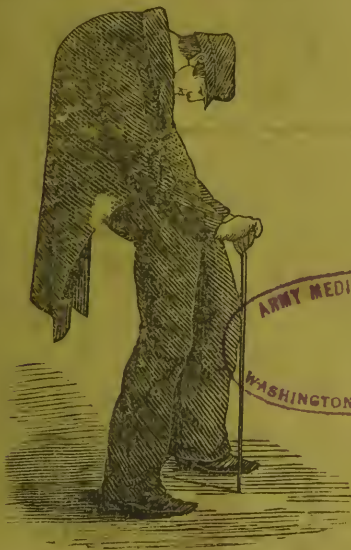


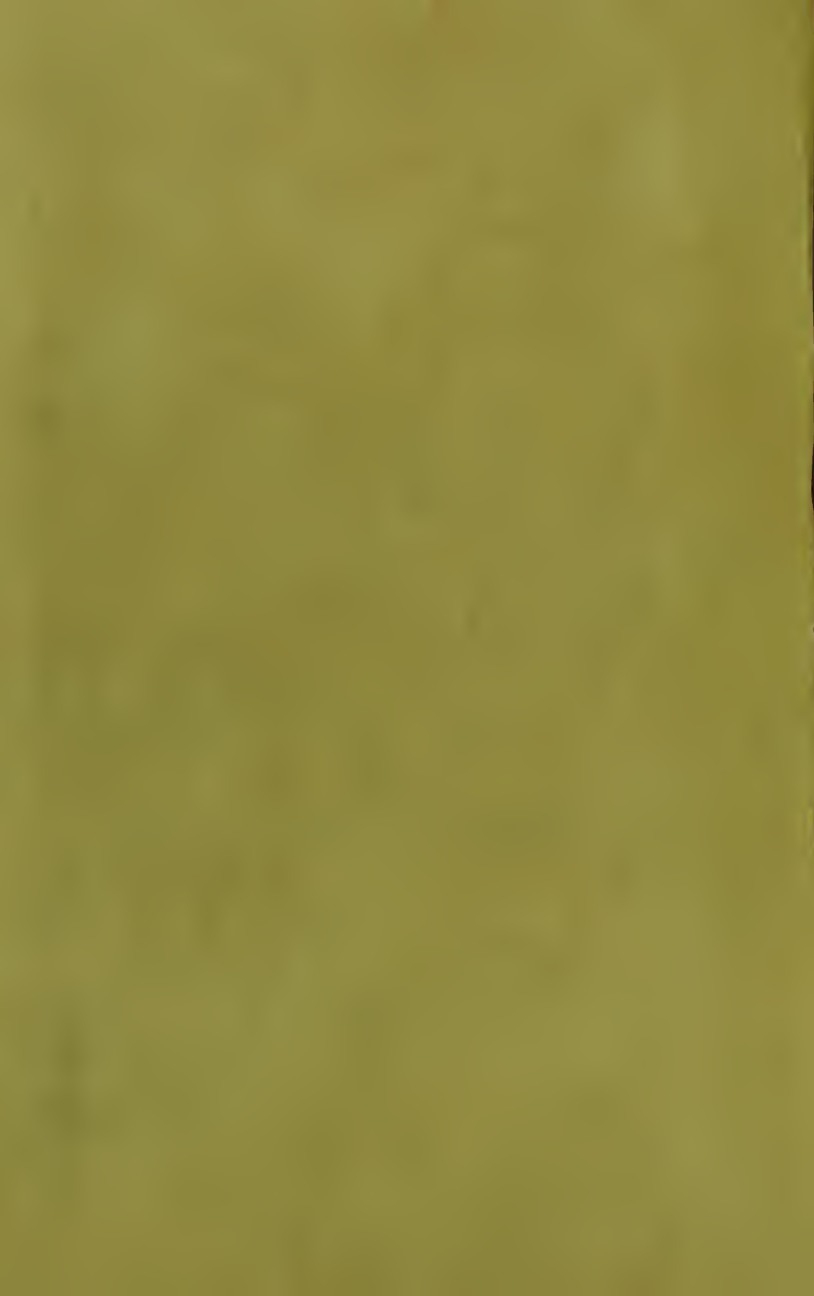
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THE
UNFORTUNATE YOUNG MAN,
OR
LIFE OF
J. FRANCIS BROWN,
WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

ANNE



Friend, would any amount of money induce you to exchange conditions with me?—Then please pity, and buy my book.



THE
UNFORTUNATE YOUNG MAN,
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PHENIX, R. I.,
E. T. LANPHEAR, BOOK AND JOB PRINTER.
1865.

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1865

TO THE PUBLIC.

The undersigned, citizens of this village, take pleasure in saying, that for several years we have known J. Francis Brown to be a good neighbor; and also that those purchasing his book will not only obtain an interesting narrative, but will aid a *needy* as well as unfortunate young man.

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STEPHEN B. WHIPPLE.

Hopeville, R. I. Oct. 24th. 1865.

T. Y 30 APR '48

THE UNFORTUNATE YOUNG MAN.

DESIRE TO SUPPORT MYSELF.

It has long been a trial to my feelings to be obliged to be a burden upon my parents, but have found no way to avoid it, owing to my greatly enfeebled condition. But, thanks to a kind Providence, my prospects at length begin to brighten—by recent suggestions of kind, sympathizing friends, I have been encouraged to prepare a brief sketch of my life, to be published in book form, hoping by sales therefrom to realize sufficient for a comfortable support.

BIRTH AND PARENTAGE.

My eyes first opened upon this world in Johnston R. I., Sept. 13, 1837. What my first impressions were, when I saw the sights, I do not know except that they were similar to those received by other little ones on like occasions. My advent created no little sensation in our house. My parents were greatly rejoiced at my safe arrival, my father when first looking on me, being so tickled he could hardly hold in. Soon my uncles and aunts all came to see me, and my arrival became the topic of general conversation throughout the neighborhood. My father and others often toted me first here and then there, sometimes tossing me up and down, deeming it no small privilege to do so. But for all these kind attentions I was not always grateful, for

old Adam's disposition, somehow or other, got mixed in with my mettle as quick as I got here ; so, as a general thing, I was not very well contented with my new condition. often becoming fretful, and squalling almost hard enough to split my throat. Indeed, I became so used to crying that it was no hardship to do so, and did not always know what I cried for. If I had understood the true state of the case, I should no doubt have acted differently. I didn't know then that all who came here had to begin in this small way : that the greatest president, emperor or king that ever lived, had to commence life as I did, a tiny, squalling, puking little fellow.

My parents' names are Smith W. and Rosanna Harrington Brown. As I joined the family it became re-organized, and shortly afterwards I was named John Francis Brown, which was duly recorded in the family record.

EARLY SICKNESS—MOVING TO FISKEVILLE—ATTENDING SCHOOL.

What occurred during my very early years I, of course, cannot very distinctly remember. My mother says when young I was very forward, being able when only nine months old to walk alone with considerable steadiness. But her loving heart was early doomed to disappointment in relation to her first born. At the tender age just named, I was siezed with distressing fits, which continued at intervals for a long time. Day after day, week after week, month after month, and even year after year, my mother watched over me with a tenderness and care, with toils and anxieties, that nothing but strong maternal love could enable her to endure. For nearly five long years I remained in this critical condition, a mere skeleton, sometimes being so reduced that I had to be tended on a pillow, and was once laid aside as dead. But by

the watchful care of a tender mother, the treatment of a skillful physician, blessed by One above higher than they, a turn came to my complaint, and a short time afterwards, when in my sixth year, I was completely relieved from the distressing malady. After the elapse of a few weeks more, my strength would compare favorably with most boys of my age.

About this time my family moved to Fiskeville, R. I. When little more than six years of age I was placed at school, but am sorry to say, that like some other boys, I thought more of play than of my book. I did not then feel the importance of obtaining an education I have since felt: that the golden moments once passed might never return. After spending some time in this indifferent manner my parents, seeing me making but little if any progress in learning, removed me from the school and placed me in the factory. I was pleased with the change, and soon became as expert as any of my age at the business.

MOVING TO HOPEVILLE—ENTERING THE FACTORY—SCUFFLING PROPENSITY—RUNNING AWAY AND ITS TRIALS.

In the spring of 1845 my folks moved to Hopeville, R. I. I at once entered the factory in this place, being then about nine years of age. The work I had to do pleased me, and I was ambitious to show the other help, that I could act my part as well as any of them. In mingling with my new associates I soon became attached to many of them, which they kindly reciprocated; and when out of the mill, I was made a welcome participator in all their sports. My strength and vivacity increased as my years advanced, and in running, jumping, scuffling, &c., I believe it was generally considered, that I was a match for most boys of my age. My propensity for quarrelling was never very prominent, though occasionally, like other boys, I got my back up when I thought my rights were pur-

posely invaded, and was not backward to pitch in and try to set the matter right. One such occasion I can distinctly remember—it occurred one evening in the principal store of the village, then kept by Mr. J. Tisdale. Myself and two other boys got into a difficulty, when I suddenly grabbed one of them, and pitched him headlong upon the floor, he falling in a manner that threw me directly upon his body, upsetting the stove as we fell, when the Old Nick was to pay generally—several other persons were present and witnessed the melee. Shortly afterwards I left the store, being helped out by Mr. Tisdale, rather faster than my usual gait.

But the worst thing I ever did in my life was running away when little more than twelve years of age. I was not only smart, but was too well aware of the fact, and, like too many other boys when high notions get into their noddles, impatient of proper restraint. Sometimes the superintendent of the factory was allowed to punish some of the younger portions of the help when tardy in getting to their work, to which some of us were very much averse. One day he whipped me for this offense which did n't set very well on my stomach, and I made up my mind that he should never have a chance to do so again. So, on the next afternoon, I and two other boys about my age, who a short time previously had been whipped for the same offence, obtained leave to go out of the mill, when we started for Providence with the determination, if possible, to find a chance to go to sea.

This was a bold undertaking for boys so young and inexperienced; and before getting half way to Providence we began to relent at the course we were pursuing. But I kept my thoughts to myself. Not so with my companions, for one of them, after having travelled an hour or so, said in a faint hearted tone,

“What will our mothers think when we don’t come home to supper?” to which the other responded, evidently sharing in the same misgivings, “Mine won’t sleep a wink to night, I know she won’t—she’ll think I’ve got drowned.” But I did not betray my real feelings, though my heart was as full as either of them, but shouted, “Cheer up boys, we are now free—let us act like men!”

When within a short distance of the city my feelings were quite severely tested—we met a cousin of mine with a team, which not a little startled me; for I felt afraid he would attempt to take me back, or in case he did not succeed, that he would report to my parents where he saw me, when an officer would be sent in pursuit. My first conjecture was realized; for as we came up he jumped from his load, when I started to run making my heels fly swiftly enough the reader may depend, on seeing which he at once started on full tilt after me, telling me as he ran that I was running away, and must stop and go back with him—that to go off in this way would kill my mother, &c. But I heeded not his calls and managed to keep out of his reach until he gave up the chase. So the reader can perceive that thus early the freedom we enjoyed began to trouble us, being not very sweet after all.

We reached the city a short time before sunset, and soon afterwards found a sea captain on the wharf near his vessel, which lay a little distance below the bridge on the east side of the river, to whom we made known our object, the writer doing the talking, for, as before hinted, my comrades had become more than three quarters sick of what we had undertaken. The captain seemed to favor our object, and told us where to find a shipping office to sign our names. I turned and started towards the office named; but on looking over my shoulder I saw my companions moving off in

quite another direction, and at a rapid pace too, when I also abandoned our project, being more than half glad to find an excuse to do so, and started after them.

The captain's negro, on seeing our movements ran after us shouting, "You belong to our ship! come back you runaways!" He soon, however, abandoned the pursuit—what was his object we did not know, but suppose he did so to frighten us. We kept on running, passing the market house and over into canal street, and soon after slackened our speed.

We loitered around during the evening first in one place then in another until about nine o'clock, when we climbed into a wagon containing a calf-rack, standing in one of the lanes running from Canal to North Main street, where we thought we would encamp for the night. The rack was large and contained a quantity of straw and a good sized bag. The writer got into the bag and the boys out of rognery tied him in, all trying to be as cheerful as we could. Soon, being tired, all were unconscious of what was passing around us. But we were not allowed to spend the night quietly for about 12 o'clock I should judge we were aroused by the barking of a dog which was close to the wagon. This not a little startled us, but we kept quiet not knowing what next might befall us. Soon the dog, which we concluded belonged to the owner of the wagon, ceased barking and shortly afterwards walked away, when we leaped from the wagon and passed over the bridge, up Westminster street, to the arcade, and sat down upon the steps. After being there a short time a policeman came along, and asked what we were doing there. We answered, "We've got lost." He again asked, "Where do you belong?" We told him we lived at Riverpoint, when he informed us we had better start along, or he should be obliged to put us where we would be taken care of, and left us

passing down towards the bridge. We did not start, however, until the watchman had reached the bridge and returned to within a few rods of us, when we jumped up and ran up Westminster street, as fast as our legs would carry us. As we started, the officer commenced running after us with all his might, and seemed to gain on us at first, which greatly frightened us; but, after running forty or fifty rods, we dodged into a lane, when he lost sight of us, and it was the last we saw of him.

By this time, we are free to confess, we had become very unhappy, feeling so guilty while passing along that we watched every nook and corner, expecting an officer to rush from behind them, and pounce upon us. The night was quite dark, which tended to intensify our fears. When we reached the outskirts of the city, being both sleepy and weary, we looked for a place where we could lie down again. Soon we found a hog-sty with considerable straw laying round the entrance, and, thinking it unoccupied, at once put ourselves in motion to take possession. But unlooked for trouble beset us. No sooner had one of my companions jumped into the yard and began to stir the straw a little, than a large hog suddenly jumped up, and, after giving one or two savage grunts, pitched at him with a fierceness that even now makes me shudder when I think of it. Not a little startled he rushed back upon the fence in a twinkling. But the ferocious animal was as nimble as he was, and at his heels in season to grab him by the pantaloons and hold him fast. Very soon, however, with my assistance, my poor comrade was released with no damage done, except tearing an ugly slit in the lower portion of one leg of his pantaloons. We supposed the infuriated beast was an old sow, and thought we had come to nab some of her little ones. It being nearly morning,

we made no more efforts to obtain rest, but began our journey homewards.

Having fully made up our minds to return home, after leaving the city and suburbs we had proper time for serious reflection. Although we felt better than we did before coming to this conclusion, yet it was exceedingly mortifying to think of our predicament—to go home under such circumstances was a bitter pill to swallow. We had undertaken to run away and then abandoned it, all our high notions of freedom having been upset and vanished as bubbles burst and vanish in the air—now we must return, and meet the consequences of the failure. All these things were talked over freely, as we passed along. “John,” said one of my companions, “to go home and get a severe whipping from my parents I can bear; but to meet my old associates and hear their taunts and jeers will kill me.” The other (poor fellow since died) responded, “I feel the same, and had almost rather be hung than go home, we shall never hear the last of it.” The writer is free to confess that to again mingle with his old associates after what had occurred, was the most cutting to his natural feelings of any thing he could conceive of, but said but little. I did however rejoin “I feel as bad about it boys, as you do; but let us go home and show by our good conduct in the future that we are sorry for what we have done and the affair will soon be unthought of,” which little speech seemed to operate somewhat as a balm to our fears. Our fever of shame and regrets however was still too high to think of returning immediately. So we loitered along taking a circuitous route during that day and the next, and reached our homes little before midnight on the third day after leaving the factory, I hope wiser and better boys than before. For some reason or other we were never punished for the offence.

SWIMMING PROPENSITY — SAVING A COMRADE FROM
DROWNING—ALSO MY BROTHER.

When quite young I learned the art of swimming, and have ever since had a strong propensity to sport in the water. Many times have I gone without my meals to indulge in the pleasing exercise, sometimes floating upon the water in one position then in another; and then would strive to the utmost to see how far I could swim under it. At other times I sought the deepest places and would dive from great heights. Sometimes, I am sorry to say, my strong desire to indulge in my favorite amusement would get the mastery of common sense and I would leave the mill in a state of high perspiration to gambol in the liquid element, often paying dear for the indulgence, by receiving a severe cold. One occasion I can well remember; it occurred in the month of June. Below the factory dam is a deep spring of very cool water, so deep and cold that no person had ever dived deep enough to reach the bottom. At the time alluded to directly from the mill I repaired to the spot on a wager, determined to do up the matter to my satisfaction. I commenced the task and dove down and down until I accomplished it, bringing up a stone as a proof of what I had done, amid the applause of several spectators. But in performing the exploit I became so chilled and stiff, that it was with difficulty I reached the shore, which brought on one of the severest colds I ever had, that lasted many weeks. This rash act was one of the means that has brought me to my present sad condition.

But my knowledge of swimming was of advantage as well as disadvantage—on different occasions it helped me to save two boys from drowning, one of them being my own brother. The first one was in the wa-

ter with me learning how to swim. On taking my eye from him a short time, for which I never could forgive myself, he got into too deep water and disappeared, and on looking for him he was no where to be seen. But in casting my eyes to the bottom of the trench I discovered the poor struggling fellow, the sight of which terribly frightened me, when as quick as thought I dove down and brought him to the surface, and soon had him on shore, where after rubbing his body and pulling him about a short time, to my great joy he revived. After this I was careful not to lose sight of inexperienced swimmers, when in the water with me.

The other boy I saved from drowning, as before stated, was my youngest brother. We then lived near the trench, and the scene occurred when I was about fifteen years of age and he about seven. The facts in the case are these :—my brother, with several other children, was standing on the wall upon the edge of the trench, watching a little dog swimming after a stick, when suddenly the stone on which he stood tipped a little and slid him into the water, whereupon the children all uttered a startled scream. I was sitting in the house at the time, and as the distressing cry fell upon my ears, I sprang through the door and ran to where the children were standing, when to my horror I saw my poor brother, with his head about one foot below the surface of the water with arms spread out and eyes wide open, going down for the last time. Without divesting myself of any of my clothing, I instantly plunged in and brought him up, not, however, until being once nearly sent to the bottom by his violent struggles, and with the assistance of another boy, as soon as possible pulled him on shore, when after various efforts to resuscitate him, our hearts were made glad by signs of returning life. The scene on that occasion I can never forget. Al-

though generally as courageous as most boys, yet I was always very sensitive in view of danger. The thought of death was always very unwelcome to my feelings ; and even now I cannot recall the appearance of my brother as I first beheld him under the water without causing a shudder to come over me.

ORIGIN OF MY TROUBLES—SEVERE SICKNESS—MY MOTHER—KINDNESS OF FRIENDS.

My expertness in, and fondness for the water, have been mostly if not entirely the cause of all my troubles. I was young and inexperienced, and did not dream that in going into the water as I did, it would effect my subsequent life. And it now seems strange, when I look back, that I could have continued to be so reckless of my health, in going into the water when my blood was in a heated state, after having caught so many colds by doing so. But I am compelled to confess, that I did not heed the warning voice, but allowed my strong desire to indulge in the sport to often overcome my better judgment, and I am now reaping the folly of giving way to it. One I have already referred to—the consequences of diving so long in the cold spring. But the one that had probably the most to do in laying the foundation for all my subsequent afflictions, I must notice more particularly. It occurred when I was little less than fifteen years of age. Directly from the factory, on the occasion referred to, I plunged into the water, and sported in and upon its bosom a long time. I distinctly remember how I felt at the time, as though it was but yesterday. I was full of vivacity and cheerfulness, and exerted myself to the utmost of my strength, greatly enjoying the delicious diversion. I continued the exercise until quite tired, when I came on shore and joined my companions in playing at ball.

I did not, however, play but a short time before I felt

exhausted, and laid down upon the ground and soon fell asleep. How long I slept I do not know, but can distinctly remember how I felt on awaking, for my entire frame was so stiff and numb, that at first I could scarcely move. In a short time, however, by a great effort, I made out to get upon my feet, and hobbled home. I shall never forget the look of surprise my dear mother gave me, nor what she said when I entered the house—she exclaimed, “Why, John! I guess you have done your last work for this world!” And, I am free to confess, I thought I had too. My mother immediately placed me in bed, which I did not leave for about three months. I soon became almost entirely helpless, sometimes being delirious, and so low at one time, that it was thought I must die. But by the tender, faithful care of an affectionate mother, blessed by a smiling Providence, I at length began to amend. In a few weeks more I was able to walk out, and a short time afterwards entered the mill again. My sickness was the rheumatic fever.

Before this my form was straight and said to be very comely; but after it I never was so erect and well as before, though generally able to do a fair day's work, the rheumatism still quite often troubling me. I soon began again to indulge in my favorite amusement, but the severe lesson I had learned made me cautious. The rheumatism has ever since more or less been my constant companion. As years have passed, it has drawn my poor frame more and more out of its natural shape, and continued to cripple and otherwise enfeeble me, until about five years since, having brought me nearly to my present deformity, when I was obliged to abandon all idea of continuing longer in the mill. Since then I have been unable to do scarcely anything towards my support. During these many years I cannot express what this distressing complaint

has often caused my every joint to endure. But thanks, devout thanks to my Heavenly Father, I am now no worse than I was one year since.

My parents are in indigent circumstances, being but illy able to give me a support, and to continue to burden them is a source of no little sorrow to me. My mother has a hard time of it, for father is also able to do but little for the family. Besides these trials a brother of mine, some three years since, enlisted in the army, and for two long years we have not heard a word from him, not knowing whether he is dead or alive, which has kept us all in sad suspense. These accumulating trials are wearing out one of the best of mothers, and nothing would afford me greater pleasure, than to be able to relieve her of a portion of her heavy burdens. With the fond hope of accomplishing this end, I have written this little book to sell, which will be light business such as I can do.

I cannot close my story without expressing my warmest thanks to Mr. S. Weston, of Providence, who, until very recently, was an entire stranger to me, for gratuitously aiding me in getting up the manuscript; and also to Mr. Stephen K. Fiske, a worthy citizen of this village, for so kindly throwing in his good influence in favor of the enterprize, as well as to others for their kind wishes that I may succeed in accomplishing what I so ardently desire.

Hopeville, R. I. Oct. 24th, 1865.

